



## More Than 50 Ways to Prevent Diabetes

By Dr. James R. Gavin, III

Immediate Past Chair, National Diabetes Education Program  
Professor of Medicine, Emory University

Millions of Americans are at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. In fact, about 40 percent of U.S. adults ages 40 to 74 – millions of whom are African American – currently have pre-diabetes, a condition that raises a person's risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. However, in clinical trials that were conducted as part of the landmark Diabetes Prevention Program, we now know that diabetes is not inevitable. By losing a small amount of weight, those who are at risk can stop or delay the onset of this devastating disease.

Some 2.7 million African Americans have diabetes, a third of whom are undiagnosed. Over the past decade, the percentage of African Americans ages 40 to 74 with type 2 diabetes has doubled, from 8.9 percent in 1980 to 18.2 percent in 1994. In addition, African Americans are 1.6 times more likely to develop diabetes than whites of similar age. In every age group, the prevalence of diabetes is higher among African American women than among African American men. For African Americans 20 years and older, 11.8 percent of women and 8.5 percent of men have diabetes.

I feel that now is a critical time to take control of our health. If we do not turn back this epidemic we threaten our future with disability and premature death. We will have to spend billions more dollars in medical care for diabetes care. The National Diabetes Education Program's (NDEP) *Small Steps. Big Rewards. Prevent type 2 Diabetes* public education campaign and its tailored message for African Americans, "More Than 50 Ways to Prevent Diabetes" can help increase our community's awareness that type 2 diabetes can be prevented.

The campaign provides free information and tools—all designed to help people at risk take the small steps needed to stop diabetes in its tracks. Customized tip sheets that use humorous messages, such as "Snack on a veggie, Reggie," and "Dance it away, Faye" can motivate our family members to take steps to prevent the disease.

As African Americans, we often use humor to deal with serious issues. But make no mistake, the epidemic of type 2 diabetes within the African American community—even among our youth—has profound consequences for the quality of our lives as individuals and as a community. We can reverse this negative trend by choosing to prevent diabetes.

The NDEP is taking the lead by providing free materials to get you started. Help your loved ones and those in the community not only *find* "More Than 50 Ways to Prevent Diabetes," but actually *adopt* them as part of a new, healthier lifestyle. No one needs to run a marathon. Big rewards can be achieved by losing 5 to 7 percent of body weight through healthy eating and getting 30 minutes of physical activity five days a week.

Diabetes is serious—but it is also preventable. We now have scientific evidence that with modest weight loss, diabetes prevention is proven, possible, and powerful.

For more information about diabetes prevention, call 1-800-438-5383 and get your free GAME PLAN for preventing type 2 diabetes or visit [www.ndep.nih.gov](http://www.ndep.nih.gov).

---

*James R. Gavin, III, M.D., Ph.D., is Immediate Past Chair of the National Diabetes Education Program, jointly sponsored by the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with the support of more than 200 partner organizations.. (10/05)*